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AUTHOR Costa, Melynda Blaylock; Skeen, Janice C.
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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for increasing student reading comprehension. The targeted population consisted of seventh grade students in a growing middle class community located in Illinois. The problem of low reading comprehension was documented through teacher, student, and parent surveys. In addition, reading interest inventories, and teacher-made comprehension assessment materials, were utilized in identifying and documenting this problem. Analysis of the probable cause data revealed that a number of factors related to low reading comprehension. Among the causes are a lack of prior knowledge and background knowledge, and a lack of motivation to read. Another cause of low comprehension in reading could be that students do not utilize proper reading strategies. Furthermore, educators are not being given adequate inservice training on the reading strategies that their students should use to improve their reading comprehension. A review of solution strategies suggested by a group of knowledgeable others combined with an analysis of the targeted site, resulted in the selection of three major categories of intervention: instruction in pre-reading strategies, active reading strategies, and post-reading strategies. Post intervention data indicated an increase in reading comprehension. Appendixes contain survey instruments, data, evaluation measures, and student samples. (Contains 26 references, and 6 tables and 2 figures of data.)(Author/RS)

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INCREASING READING COMPREHENSION IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Melynda Blaylock Costa
Janice C. Skeen

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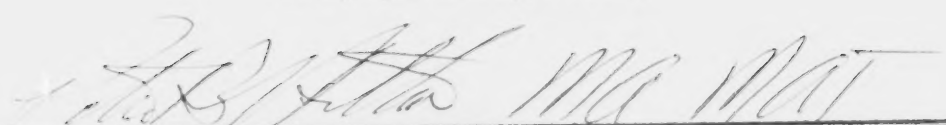

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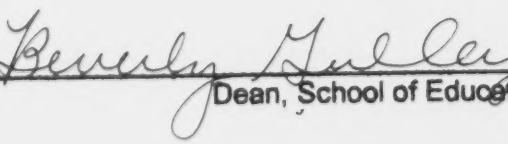

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Abstract

This report will describe a program for increasing student reading comprehension. The targeted population will consist of seventh grade students in a growing middle class community located in Illinois. The problem of low reading comprehension will be documented through teacher, student, and parent surveys. In addition, reading interest inventories, and teacher made comprehension assessment materials will be utilized in identifying and documenting this problem.

Analysis of the probable cause data reveals that a number of factors related to low reading comprehension. Among the causes are a lack of prior knowledge and background knowledge and a lack of motivation to read. Another cause of low comprehension in reading could be that students do not utilize proper reading strategies. Furthermore, educators are not being given adequate in service training on the reading strategies that their students should use to improve their reading comprehension.

A review of solution strategies suggested by a group of knowledgeable others combined with an analysis of the targeted site, resulted in the selection of three major categories of intervention instruction in pre-reading strategies, active reading strategies, and post-reading strategies. Post intervention data indicated an increase in reading comprehension.

Thank You

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Most importantly, thanks to the students in the targeted seventh grade language arts class for your eagerness, your hard work, and your improvement in the area of reading comprehension.

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CHAPTER 1

Problem Statement and Context

The students of the targeted seventh grade classes exhibit low reading comprehension skills, which interferes with the understanding of the written text, both fiction and nonfiction. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes teacher interviews, assessments, and observations, parent surveys, and student surveys.

Local Context of the Problem

This middle school is located in a southwest suburb of a large metropolitan area of the Midwest. The school was built in the 1950's and houses 800 sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. These students are 97.8% White, 0.9% Mexican-American, 0.6% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.4% Black, and 0.3% Native American. The percentage of students from a low-income household is 0.4% and 0.0% are limited in English proficiency. The attendance rate in this middle school is 95.4%. There is 5.9% student mobility, 0.1% chronic truancy, and 1 chronic truant. The average class size in sixth grade is 29.2, and in grade eight the class size is 24.3.

During the school day, students take core subjects of mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts. The mathematics, science, and social studies classes are each

40 minutes in length. The language arts class includes a block of 80 minutes each day, because the language arts teacher is responsible for both English and reading curriculum. This curriculum consists of reading, literature appreciation, increasing vocabulary, grammar, spelling, writing, speech, and listening skills.

In addition to the core subjects, the students take a variety of exploratory arts courses. Sixth grade students take industrial arts, art, computers, and family and consumer science. Seventh grade students take industrial arts, music, computers, and family and consumer science. Eighth grade students take industrial arts, art, computers, and family and consumer science. Each course lasts for a marking period of twelve weeks.

The number of teachers at this middle school is 46. There are ten sixth grade teachers, seven seventh grade teachers, seven eighth grade teachers, and three teachers who teach both seventh and eighth grade. In addition, there are three Regular Education Initiative (REI) teachers and one self-contained special education teacher. Extra support is offered to any student during his/her study hall at the request of the student or the teacher. This support is offered in a learning lab staffed by a certified teacher and an aide. The school has three paid aides and a varying number of parent volunteer aides. There is a media center specialist and a full time aide in the media center also. There are three paid lunchroom supervisors. The exploratory arts department includes four physical education teachers, one music/choir teacher, one band director, two family and consumer science instructors, two industrial technology teachers, two computer teachers, and one art teacher. The teachers all belong to the local teacher's association. There are two office secretaries. As additional support staff, this middle school has two social workers,

an itinerant psychologist, an itinerant social worker, and a speech pathologist. There are two elementary schools that feed into this middle school.

The mission statement for this school reads:

> The mission of .....Middle School, a center of learning with a supportive, diverse, and progressive team, is to develop critical thinkers who are socially responsible and productive members of society.
>
> To accomplish this we, in cooperation with the community will: create meaningful and varied learning opportunities, encourage collaboration and problem solving, provide positive role modeling, empower individuals to make positive choices, support emotional, physical, social, and academic growth. (School Mission Statement)

In order to enable the faculty and staff to achieve the philosophy held in the mission statement, this middle school has taken a team approach to education. The sixth grade is set up in teams of two teachers. There is one seventh grade team, one eighth grade team, and one seventh/eighth grade mixed team. The special education students are serviced through an REI home school model. REI stands for regular education initiative. REI students are instructed in a regular classroom; in many cases the REI teacher is in the classroom co-teaching. This is proving to be a positive, enriching experience for students and teachers.

This school is rich in extra curricular activities available to the students. During the school day students may act as office workers or spend their study hall as media center workers. The school is virtually a beehive of activity everyday after school.

Academically, there is tutoring for at-risk students. There is a computer club, math club, chess club, yearbook staff, scola, chamber choir, and drama club. Also on many days after school there are band sectional practices.

Sports activities are a constant force in this school. All sports are limited to seventh and eighth graders. In the fall, students may sign up for cross-country. Students may try out for girl's volleyball and boy's soccer as only a certain number of participants can be effectively coached. In the winter, there are seventh and eighth grade basketball teams for girls and boys. Another winter sport of choice is wrestling. In the spring, girls may try out for soccer. Additionally a student may sign up for the track team.

The middle school building is used for community park district activities such as basketball for youths and volleyball for adults. The YMCA also uses the building for volleyball and basketball. The fields are used for community soccer league practices and baseball practices for Little League. The PTO holds monthly meetings in the building, and the school board meets there at scheduled times.

School District Context

This unit school district consists of one high school, two middle schools, and six elementary schools, and it encompasses 64 square miles. This rapidly growing area services students from six different surrounding communities in two separate counties. Because of the growth in the past ten years and the projected growth, the community recently passed a referendum to build a new middle school, two new elementary schools, a high school, and add a freshman center to one of the high school campuses. The adding of classrooms, and renovations were also made to existing buildings. The total district enrollment in the 1997-1998 school year was 7884.

The 1997-1998 operating budget was $35.6 million, 81% of, which was personnel related. Per pupil expenditure was $4,892. Twenty-four million dollars of the operating budget is derived from property tax levies, and $9.6 million is from state aid.

Of the 7884 students enrolled in the district, 93.3% are White, 4.4% are Mexican-American, 1.3% are Asian/Pacific Islander, .9% are Black, and .1% are Native American. In the district, 1.4% of the student population are from families of low income, and .3% of the students are eligible for bilingual education. Attendance in this district is 95.4%. There are twenty-six students described as chronically truant, and the student mobility rate is 10.5%.

The district staff consists of 404 certified staff members, twenty-one administrators, and 193 support staff. There are twenty-two vocational staff at the high school and 111 special education staff. It was at the end of the 1997-1998 school year when the district decided to take over its own special education. In the past, a special education cooperative supplied the district with its entire special education staff.

The classroom teachers and administrators in the district are 76.2% female and 23.8% are male. In the district, 99% of the staff is White, while .9% are Mexican-American, and .1% are Asian/Pacific Islander. The average teaching experience is 10.9 years. The percent of teachers with a bachelor degree is 68.6% and teachers with a master's degree and above is 31.4%. The average teacher's salary is $36,649, while the average administrator salary is $69,930. The dollar amount spent directly on education each year is $20,070,485.

Pupil to teacher ratio is 21.9 to 1, and the pupil to administrator ratio is 463 to 1. The average class size in the district is reported to be 27.5 in grade six and 24.6 in grade eight.

Programs to help students, teachers, administrators, and staff achieve success in this district included the development of a district wide curriculum, and district affiliation with North Central Association. There is a district-wide effort to make Regular Education Initiative a priority. In addition there are continuing efforts to include and update technology in each building in the district.

Community Context

A few short years ago this small suburb was an even smaller village. Set amid the cornfields of the Midwest, this village was not considered a suburb or a metropolitan area. In the 1990s westward expansion progressed to the area. People were attracted to reasonable housing prices and good schools. In 1995 alone, 266 building permits were issued for new home construction. Subdivisions continued to be completed seemingly overnight, as developers bought the surrounding countryside.

The village itself is 5.5 square miles; however, the school district encompasses an area of 64 square miles. The dramatic growth has had an impact on the schools in the area. Prior to the population increase, the community had three elementary schools, one junior high school, and one high school. Additionally, there was one parochial school. With the growth, the community passed two school referendums. As a result, there will be eight elementary schools, three middle schools, a freshman center, and two high schools.

Statistics reveal a young community:

Ages	Percentage of the population	Ages	Percentage of the population
Under 1	2.3%	40-49	16.6%
1-13	18.1%	50-59	8.1%
14-18	7.8%	60-69	8.2%
19-29	15.0%	70-79	2.8%
30-39	17.8%	80+	3.3%

The population includes 98.0% Whites, 1.3% Mexican-American, 0.7% other, and 0.0% Black, though these statistics are changing on a daily basis.

Twenty-nine point seven percent of the population is employed in managerial or professional careers. Another 17.9% are in administrative support positions. Fourteen point six percent of the population is in sales, and 9% is in craft or repair fields. Eight point eight percent is in the service industry, and the transportation industry employs 8.4% of the people. Three point seven percent is listed as helpers or laborers, 3.4% is employed in factories, and 1.2 % works in the agricultural field.

The youth of the area are very active in sport activities. These activities include baseball, softball, basketball, football leagues, and wrestling clubs. The park district offers a great variety of year round activities for persons age two through adult.

In the community there are twelve churches, one library, and three childcare facilities. The town has several very active Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops and religious instruction classes. Some schools also provide a meeting place for many of these activities, including worship services.

These groups of scouts, religious classes, and some school groups perform a variety of community service projects on an on-going basis. This closely ties the community to its youth and gives the community a vested interest in the young people who live here and attend the schools. The connections between the schools and the community are very strong in this small suburb.

National Context of the Problem

"Recent U.S. research at both the national and state levels indicated that students experience a declining interest and slowing development in reading through the junior high and senior high school grades" (Farr, Fay, Myers, and Ginsberg as cited in Bintz, 1997). Educators recognize that reading is the basis of our educational system and indeed most consider reading to be a life skill. As a nation, however, parents, teachers, administrators, and politicians are expressing continuing concerns about the reading ability of the youth. There are increasing efforts at all levels to determine the cause and affect the solution to this problem.

Bintz also reports that according to the 1986 National Assessment of Education Progress (Applebee, Langer, and Mullis, 1988 as cited in Bintz, 1997), students who are poor readers employ fewer strategies to help them read. If they are required to interpret what they read, the students will also have difficulty completing the reading assignment. Perhaps because reading is difficult, and therefore not enjoyable for these children, less time is devoted to independent reading both in and out of school

There is increasing evidence of the decline in the reading proficiency of our students. According to researchers such as Goodlad (1984) cited in Bintz (1997), there may be a correlation between the decline of reading skills and the time spent on reading

instruction in the classroom. Goodlad notes that "...excluding the common reading activity oral turn-taking from a common text, reading occupies only approximately 6% of class time in elementary school, 3% in junior high school, and 2% in senior high school" (pp.106-107).

Goodman (1973) as cited in Dymock (1993) states readers may be concentrating primarily on reading for accuracy and forgetting to find meaning in what they read. Goodman states that "...remedial reading classes are filled with youngsters in late elementary and secondary school who can sound out words, but get little meaning from their reading" (p.491).

"From the very Office of the President of the United States, and resounding through numerous states and school districts, the goal of having every child able to read with competence and confidence has become a national priority" (American Educator, 1998, p. 52). It is no wonder. "Over the last two decades, middle and high school teachers have faced exploding numbers of students who don't read or write well enough for minimal functioning in their content classes" (Greene, 1998). According to Carr (1988), students at all levels are lagging in problem-solving skills and thinking skills. The last National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP; U.S. Department of Education) revealed that only about a quarter of fourth graders tested could actually read at or above a fourth grade level (cited in Greene, 1998). "The number of poor readers in our society is too high. Reading failure is overwhelmingly the most significant reason that children are retained, assigned to special education or given long-term remedial services" (American Educator, 1998, p. 52). According to Greene, many middle and high

teachers, with whom she has had contact, tell her that they are "burned out" by the frustrations of trying to teach students lacking in the most basic of skills (Greene, 1998).

Overall reading performance has been more or less unchanged since 1972 according to the NAEP report. It appears to be a positive fact, since reading scores have not declined in over twenty years, however, upon further reflection, one realizes that reading scores have not increased either (American Educator, 1998).

According to the 1991 IEA literacy study, when students in our nation are compared to the world, the advantage American students possess is not as great at the 9th grade level. Fifty-two to fifty-five percent of U.S. students meet or exceed the average of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Executive Summary, 1991).

There appear to be as many opinions as to why reading is declining, as there are researchers. However, there exists a wealth of information, strategies, and interventions available which educators can employ to make significant strides in the improvement of reading schools across America.

Chapter Two

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document the extent of poor reading comprehension in seventh grade students, teacher, student, and parent surveys were used as well as reading comprehension tests and reading interest inventories. Assessments such as comprehension tests and the Basic Reading Inventory by Jerry Johns (1997) were also used.

Of the 24 surveys sent to the parents of the targeted students, 12 surveys were returned (Appendix A). Parents were asked how often they observed their child reading independently per week. Only 8 % of the parents reported that their child read five or more hours per week. The same percentage stated that their child read four hours per week, and another 8% reported their child read three hours per week. There was a significant increase at the two-hour level as 33% said they observed their child reading two hours a week. Twenty-five percent observed their child reading less than an hour per week and sixteen percent did not observe their child reading at all.

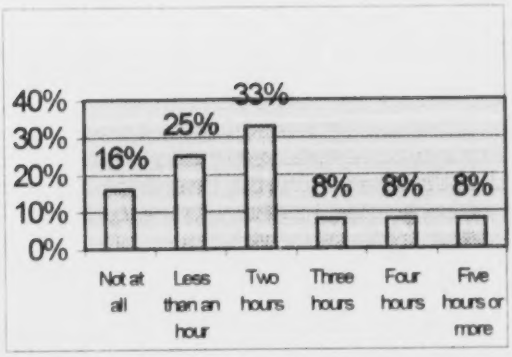

Figure 1. How often do you observe your child reading?

When asked "How often per week you and your child read together?" 92% of the parents reported reading less than an hour or not at all. Eight percent read five hours or more per week.

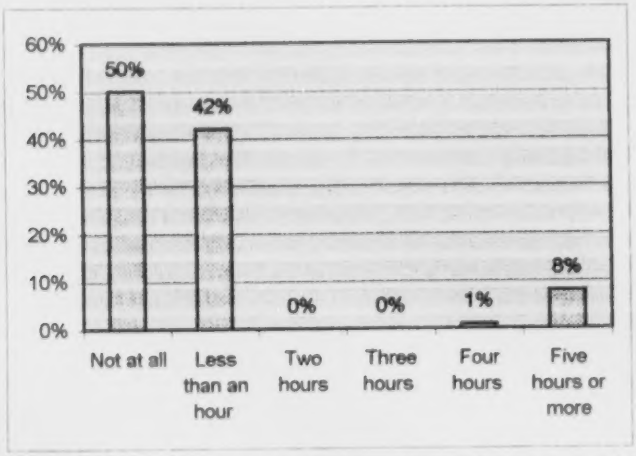

Figure 2. How often do you and your child read together per week?

Ninety-two percent of parents surveyed believe their child to be a "good" reader. No parent felt that reading frustrated his or her child. Eighty-three percent of the parents

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stated that their child would rather watch television than read, and 75%of the children would rather participate in an activity other than reading. While the majority of parents felt their child read well, it is noted that the students do not appear to spend much time reading on their own, and it is not one of their favorite activities.

Prior to the intervention, the targeted seventh grade students were asked to complete a survey regarding reading habits and strategies that they currently used while reading (Appendix B). Since the intervention involved strategies to be used before, during, and after reading, the survey results have been organized in a similar manner.

Table 1

Strategies Used Prior to Reading

	Almost Never	Once in a While	Much of The Time	Almost Always
How often do you skim reading material?	39%	50%	6%	6%
How often do you use KWL?	37%	26%	26%	11%
How often do you use webs?	47%	32%	21%	0%

Skimming reading material prior to reading is an important strategy used to increase reading comprehension. Regardless it is noted that only 12% of the students reported using such a strategy 'much of the time' or 'almost always'. A majority of the students surveyed indicated they rarely use KWL or webs before reading.

Table 2

Strategies Used During Reading

	Almost Never	Once in a While	Much of The Time	Almost Always
Look for main ideas in reading?	23%	38%	19%	19%
Reread for understanding?	19%	38%	5%	38%
Make predictions while reading?	40%	40%	10%	10%
Question what you are reading?	28%	44%	11%	17%
Use context clues?	42%	26%	11%	21%

It was interesting to note a majority of students responded that they 'once in a while' or 'almost never' utilize any of the active reading strategies listed in the survey. Since looking for main ideas, rereading, making predictions, questioning, and using context clues is imperative to reading comprehension, it is essential that students learn to utilize these skills to become active readers. It is possible students either have not been taught the use of such strategies, or they do not recognize when they are in use.

Table 3

Strategies Used After Reading

	Almost Never	Once in a While	Much of The Time	Almost Always
Relate to your Experiences?	39%	28%	22%	11%
Use KWL?	37%	26%	26%	11%
Use webs?	47%	32%	21%	0%
Discuss in Small Groups?	16%	47%	37%	0%
Discuss with Entire Class?	11%	37%	32%	21%

When asked whether they relate what they read to their own experiences, 39% of the students surveyed report that they 'almost never' make these connections. However, according to the students, small group discussions as well as large classroom discussions occurred on a frequent basis after reading. These post reading activities are often teacher directed, therefore it stands to reason that students would be involved in teacher directed reading strategies more often than they are in independent reading strategies.

Another instrument used to gather baseline data was the Basic Reading Inventory created by Jerry L. Johns (1997). Students were asked to read a short passage out loud. This passage had been determined to be at the seventh grade reading level. The students are scored in two categories; word recognition and reading comprehension. Following are the results for the eight students tested using the Basic Reading Inventory. These students were chosen to reflect a heterogeneous group from the class.

Table 4

Basic Reading Inventory Results

	Word Recognition	Comprehension
Student 1	Independent/Instructional	Instructional
Student 2	Independent/Instructional	Instructional/Frustration
Student 3	Independent/Instructional	Instructional/Frustration
Student 4	Independent/Instructional	Instructional
Student 5	Instructional/Frustration	Instructional/Frustration
Student 6	Instructional/Frustration	Instructional
Student 7	Independent	Frustration
Student 8	Instructional/Frustration	Frustration

The word recognition-scoring guide has several developmental levels beginning with "independent" which allows zero to one miscue. A reader at the "independent/instructional" level may have a total of two to four miscues. If the student has a total of five miscues, he would be placed at the "instructional" level on the guide. Six to nine miscues by the reader would indicate an "instructional/frustration" level. Ten or more miscues would place the reader at the "frustration" level. Word recognition miscues are determined when the reader is reading out loud and misreads or mispronounces a word.

The comprehension scoring guide is much like the word recognition guide beginning with the highest level which is the independent level. Students only making one error on a comprehension question will receive an independent rating. While one

and a half to two questions missed would indicate an "independent/frustration" level. Two and half errors point to an "instructional" level. Students with three to four and a half errors receive an "instructional/frustration" rating. Any student missing five or more of the comprehension questions is at the "frustration" level.

It is especially interesting to notice that while many students do poorly in the comprehension assessment, they do better on the word recognition section. For example, student 7 from Table 4 rated at the "independent" level for word recognition, but scored at the "frustration" level on the comprehension section. This would suggest that some students are adept at word recall, but do not understand what they read. The goal of the intervention is to create more active readers thus raising the comprehension scores.

Eight language arts teachers responded to the teacher survey (Appendix C). They were asked to estimate how many students they considered to be good readers, how many were average readers, and how many were below average readers in their opinion. According to the teachers surveyed, 33% of their students were considered to be good readers. While 46% were thought to be average readers and 20.5% were poor readers.

When asked how they determined the reading abilities of their students, teachers said they observed the ability of the students to clearly read aloud, and how they answered various comprehension questions. In fact, 66% said they based their beliefs upon how well their students read aloud. While 72% claimed students' abilities to answer comprehension questions correctly was another factor in determining reading ability.

Of the comprehension strategies such as predicting, questioning, and activating prior knowledge, all teachers surveyed reported to have taught reading strategies in the

language arts classroom. A wide variety of strategies including, but not limited to, predicting, questioning, activating prior knowledge, and vocabulary were being used. In addition to these strategies, group discussion, think aloud, prior knowledge instruction, personal connection discussion, and graphic organizers were also commonly used.

Probable Causes

The literature suggests several underlying causes for poor reading comprehension in middle school and high school students. Some possible causes include poor background knowledge, poor motivation and reflection, and lack of early learning experiences on the part of the reader. Poor training of teachers in various reading strategy instructions may also contribute to the problem.

Overwhelmingly, the lack of prior knowledge and background knowledge have been documented as causes of low reading comprehension (Christen, Murphy, 1991). According to Collins, (1998) other reasons include a lack of motivation and experience on the part of the student. "...students who are not successful in the classroom have not had experience with language in meaningful, social situations". Readers do not have the background knowledge to make relevant associations and this causes them to ignore portions of the text (Collins 1998 p. 2).

There is also a certain amount of negativity and indifference on the part of the reader. Disabled students especially, have been taught heavy skill instruction and have therefore been removed from using reading as a tool for living and learning. Lyon (1997) agrees and has stated, "...deficits in developing and maintaining the motivation to learn to read" as one of the four major factors impeding reading comprehension (p.1).

exposure to language, words in print, prior knowledge, verbal skills, and knowledge of the purposes of reading also contributes to poor reading comprehension.

Similarly, in many poor readers, there is no evidence of careful reflection on the part of the reader (Cantrell, 1997). Reading becomes a passive experience for many students. Reading and wondering about the text is foreign to many students. Poor readers do not use metacognitive strategies as often as good readers use such strategies (Weir, 1998).

However, the majority of the responsibility for reading comprehension does not lie solely on the reader. Students need help moving from memorizing information to meaningful learning (Christen & Murphy, 1991). Students are not receiving instruction in developing deeper understandings of what they are reading according to the 1993 British Columbia Communication Skills Assessment (Curriculum and Resources Branch). Teachers are not adequately trained in the reading comprehension strategies needed in order to assist students in this process. This is especially true at the middle school level where "little attention has been given to effective ways of teaching." (Quiocho, 1997, p. 450). Therefore, students have deficits in acquired reading comprehension strategies (Lyon, 1997).

What teachers say they believe about reading instruction differs from what they actually have students do according to the 1991 IEA Reading Literacy Study (Reading literacy in the U.S.). According to Badger and Thomas (1992), subject matter has always dominated instruction. The fact that students move from class to class without seeing how one subject relates to another reinforces the notion that subject area knowledge consists of a set of concrete facts and theories (Badger & Thomas, 1992). At the middle school

and high school level in particular, little attention is given to effective teaching methods in reading, and skills taught in isolation do not prepare students adequately (Carr, 1990).

In the literature classroom particularly, the emphasis has been on literature instruction or teaching themes of novels and short stories, rather than reading skill instruction. Reading instruction lacks critical analysis (Collins, 1998). In the content area classrooms, such as social studies, math, and science, instruction emphasized the skill and drill approach with the use of worksheets to enhance teacher directed instruction (Katims & Harris, 1997). The reason for this type of instruction, according to Greene (1998) is that few middle and high school teachers are trained in the teaching of reading skills and strategies. That coupled with the fact that, according to Greene (1998), there are no literacy based programs in existence, has contributed to the drop in reading comprehension scores.

"Only in the last five years, have schools begun to identify ways to optimize language to promote higher level thinking" (Collins, 1998, p.1). Unfortunately, the teacher training required has only impacted the site school in the last year and the impact was not very wide spread. With declining reading scores, the district decided to provide in-service training related to strategies of reading and vocabulary acquisition to only half of the reading teachers at the middle school level. The seminar which was provided lasted only three short hours and highlighted just a few of the strategies that could be implemented in the classroom. Therefore, it has been a common practice in the typical language arts classroom at the middle school level to teach literature analysis and literature appreciation rather than the much-needed reading strategy instruction. This is evidenced by baseline data consisting of comprehension quizzes administered preceding

the intervention. The average score of the control group of students was 78% on the quiz used for baseline data. Seventy-eight percent is an average score for such a test. The teacher survey supports the data in so much as the teachers believed their students to be average readers. Teachers felt that 66.5% of their student population were average or below average readers. In other words, a majority of the targeted students were believed to be just average or below average readers before the intervention.

In summary, there is no singular cause for low reading comprehension in readers today. Instead, there are several reasons for the lack of reading skills in today's young people. One probable cause includes the lack of prior knowledge and background knowledge which students bring to learning and reading experiences. The lack of motivation on the part of the reader is another of these causes. Students lack the proper reading strategies such as appropriate metacognitive reflection of reading material. This is a result of the lack of adequate teacher training given to teachers in both language arts and the content areas. Because students come to teachers with poor background knowledge and inadequate skills, such as print awareness and verbal abilities, it is ever so important that teachers teach reading strategies to assist students in, not just decoding words on a page, but actually understanding and reflecting upon what is read.

Chapter Three

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Introduction

The possible solutions to the problem of poor reading comprehension in middle school students are seemingly endless. There are many schools of thought that prevail. One consists of teaching reading comprehension strategies and providing instruction on how, when, and why to use such strategies as prereading, predicting, questioning, thinking aloud, metacognition and reflection, paraphrasing, and classifying vocabulary. Several graphic organizers can aid in this process, as well as the popular "think aloud" modeling strategy.

Another approach is to engage students in cooperative group settings and encourage discussion and debates. Teaching readers how to respond to, and ask, open-ended questions provides for worthwhile discussions rather than the recall questions, which so many teachers use. Some suggest using authentic reading materials such as newspapers, magazines, brochures, advertisements, and the Internet as supplemental materials. Motivation is also a key issue in this quest for improving student-reading

abilities. Most researchers tend to agree that many readers' approach reading with a lack of prior knowledge that impedes their ability to connect with the novel or the text. For example, according to Christen and Murphy (1991), preteaching to assess prior knowledge and to provide background knowledge is essential. Encouraging readers to read is at the forefront of this issue. Only with continued practice at reading, can students become better readers and therefore comprehend more of what they read. Finally, Morgan and Richardson (1997) contend that the teacher's role should be one that integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing in order to facilitate reading comprehension. With the many choices one has, it is important to elaborate on all possible solutions to arrive at the one or more strategies that will be beneficial to students in this seventh grade site.

Literature Review

Since many students need help comprehending the material, there have been several reading strategies geared to assist students in becoming more active readers and in turn, understanding what is read with more accuracy and fluency. "A strategy is an individual's approach to a task, in including how a student thinks and acts when planning executing, and evaluation performance on a task and its outcomes" (Katim & Harris, 1997, p. 116).

However, it is not the role of the teacher to simply introduce these strategies intermittently. According to a report from the Curriculum and Resources Branch (1996), "Students benefit when effective reading strategies are explicitly described, explained, and modeled, so they know what the strategy is, how it is used, and under what circumstances it can be used" (p. 2). The report further suggests that students keep a

log in order to focus their understanding of different readings and to identify the strategies that worked for them in order to acquire and build those understandings (Curriculum and Resources Branch, 1996). Blevins (1990) confirms what was stated in the report.

> As with all strategy instruction, remember these key points:
>
> *Provide explicit instruction on how, when, and why to use the strategy.
>
> *Frequently model the use of the strategy (use the think-aloud approach).
>
> *Provide opportunities to practice the strategy.
>
> *Ask student to model and explain their strategy.
>
> *Point out flexibility in strategy use, such as multiple strategies that can be used in a particular situation (p.1).

Several strategies are described and suggested for implementation. Predicting what will occur next in the material is perhaps one of the more powerful strategies that is suggested. "The comprehension strategy of making predictions includes activating prior knowledge, making predictions, then reading and confirming or revising predictions" (Blevins, 1990, p.1). By making predictions and then either affirming them or discounting them, readers become a more active part of the reading process. Predicting is a valuable strategy in reading comprehension. When readers make predictions about a text then read to confirm or alter their predictions, they are being encouraged to read with a purpose. Then the reader is forced to become an active participant in the reading process thereby improving reading comprehension (Morgan and Richardson, 1997).

There are a variety of ways that this can be handled in the classroom. For instance, different graphic organizers, such as KWL, can be used to alert the teacher and the reader as to what is already know to the reader about a particular subject. A KWL asks students to brainstorm what they already know (K) about a topic. The next step is to list any questions that they may have about what they will read. Finally, the students read the selection and answer some of the questions posed in the wonder section and list the answers to the questions in the (W) column along with other information learned in the last column of the graphic organizer, the learned column (L). "...making predictions before they read has caused them to stop and think about what they know about a topic" (Ogle as cited in Cantrell, 1997). Blevins (1990) concurs, the use of graphic organizers helps readers get at the main ideas in their reading.

According to Freire reading is a strategic process that requires students to actively construct meaning from reading (Freire as cited in Katims & Harris, 1997). The paraphrasing strategy is yet another reading strategy suggested by Shumaker, Denton, and Deshler (1984) to help students glean meaning from text. This strategy has been found to increase reading comprehension significantly in students with learning disabilities and without. The strategy contains three steps and includes an easy to remember acronym, RAP. The acronym stands for "Read a paragraph, Ask your self questions about the main idea and details, and Put the main ideas and details into your own words" (Katims & Harris, 1997, p.118). It is hoped that the readers will continue to keep talking to themselves, or "rapping" in order to improve reading comprehension (Katims & Harris, 1997).

Another way for students to actively participate in the reading process and to predict outcomes as they read is to use a strategy called embedded questions (Weir, 1998). This strategy incorporates metacognition, a thinking about thinking approach. Hopefully, students will think about what they are reading during this approach as well. Perkins (1992) as quoted in Weir (1998), states, the highest level of metacognitive thinkers are "reflective learners" who "reflect on their thinking-in-progress, ponder their strategies, and revise them" (p. 102). According to Weir (1998), some effective strategies that good readers use in order to make sure that they comprehend what they read are:

*Self-monitoring for understanding;

*Making, confirming, or disproving predictions;

*Formulating and answering questions;

*Rereading, retelling, or mentally replaying a story;

*Employing sensory imagery;

*Making connections between story features and personal experience (p. 459).

One way for teachers to help students to become effective readers and employ the aforementioned strategies is to use a strategy called "think-aloud". This process is done orally all of the time in many classrooms when students and teachers are discussing reading selections. This strategy is used mostly to model good metacognitive thinking processes and is used while students read in order to stimulate readers into becoming more active participants in the reading process. During the think-aloud, teachers model such skills as how to express thoughts, attitudes, feelings, and learning strategies used while reading the selection (Chamot, 1993). However, it is often the case that the teacher

asks the class questions and only one or two students eventually answer the question aloud. This makes assessment of student comprehension on a wide scale difficult. To assess students individually while teaching prediction and questioning strategies during reading, Weir (1998) suggests embedding questions into the text. This requires the teacher to actually cut stories and reading material apart and embed or add questions to the material. The questions should as students to predict, recall important information, as their own questions and find key points both written and inferred.

There are guidelines to this type of strategy. Weir (1998) suggests teachers embed their questions so that they are able to draw attention to details such as the setting, characters, and conclusions that are implied but not stated directly. Include several prediction points throughout the selection. Ask students to pose their own questions. Have students highlight evidence and clues to support answers to questions that are inferential. Finally, Weir (1998) recommends that students be asked to paraphrase and retell particularly long or difficult incidents in the selection.

Overall, it is important that readers become active participants in the reading process. This means that teachers would engage students in pre-reading activities that set the purpose for reading, teach vocabulary, activate prior knowledge, and encourage prediction. During reading, teachers can point out difficult words and concepts, identify problems and solutions, and relate to personal experiences. Post reading activities can include graphic organizers to organize key ideas (such as webs, KWL's, charts, graphs, or outlines), and metacognitive strategies (American Educator Every Child Reading, 1998).

Vocabulary is indeed another indicator of reading comprehension. In other words, word recognition and understanding of the vocabulary can determine whether or not students understand what they have read. Therefore, several researchers have suggested ways in which vocabulary can be taught as a pre-reading strategy. In fact, Christen and Murphy (1991) have suggested that vocabulary instruction prior to reading assists readers who lack the prior knowledge to read. Direct instruction in vocabulary appears to be more beneficial than incidental learning for the acquisition of vocabulary (Smith, 1998). Johnson and Rasmussen (1998) suggest a wide variety of vocabulary activities to enhance knowledge of newly acquired words. One such strategy is classification. This strategy is said to clarify and enrich the meaning of known words, and to add new words into readers' productive vocabularies. The teacher begins by giving the students a list of vocabulary words and some known words that are synonyms with these new words. After instruction on the new words, students are asked to classify the words into categories. Each category is a new vocabulary word. Students can then be asked to justify their reasons for categorizing the words the way that they did. This strategy combines a higher level thinking skill (classifying) with the introduction of new words.

Another method for increasing vocabulary and therefore comprehension, is semantic maps or new words. These maps show relationships between new words and other ideas. Pictures, diagrams, labels, and charts can be included in the descriptions (Johnson and Rasmussen (1998).

Previewing is another important strategy to which student with poor reading comprehension can be exposed. Building background knowledge is essential to

comprehension. A child's knowledge of the subject can be increased through discussion or KWL charts. Without the proper background knowledge, students find it difficult to draw meaning from the text. Collins (1998):

> Critical thinking implies that a reader is actively and constructively engaged in the process of reading. The reader is continually negotiating what he or she knows with what he or she is trying to make sense of. The role of background knowledge and the student's ability to draw upon it are essential to critical thinking/learning (p. 2).

The effective reader will approach a reading selection with life experiences and vocabularies that aid in the reading process. However, many readers do not enter the 'playing field' on equal ground. Many low readers lack adequate prior knowledge. Pre-reading discussions, KWL's, and setting the purpose for reading can all assist readers in gaining prior knowledge of a subject. "Teachers who encourage pre-reading discussions to help readers activate prior knowledge or fill in gaps in the background knowledge set the stage for critical reading" (Collins, 1998). Teachers can help students to identify purposes of reading, formulate predictions or hypothesis, and test the accuracy of those predictions throughout the reading process (Collins, 1998).

Purposes of previewing or scanning material include "to identify purpose, scope, evident bias, conclusions" (Curriculum and Resources Branch, 1996). Christen and Murphy (1991) as cited in Smith (1998), "contend that research clearly emphasizes that new information must be integrated with what the learner already knows" (p. 2). Specifically, there are three questions that Smith (1998) suggests can be asked before they engage in the reading process. These questions are: "What is it? What is it like?

examples? By using this approach, teachers can help readers to see relationships between familiar terms and less familiar terms thus improving reading comprehension (p.2).

Lyon (1997) states:

> The ultimate goal of reading instruction is to enable children to understand what they read. Children who comprehend well seem to be able to activate their relevant background knowledge when reading. That is they can relate what is on the page to what they already know. Good vocabularies help, as does a knack for summarizing predicting, and clarifying what they have read. Children's ability to understand what they are reading is inextricably linked to their background knowledge. Young children who are given opportunities to learn, think, and talk about new areas of knowledge will gain much from reading (p.2).

When engaging students in class discussions about what has been read, what are the best kinds of questions to ask? Many agree that open-ended questions spark elaborate discussions, thought provoking comments, critical thinking, and perhaps improved reading comprehension. Open-ended questions are an improvement over the multiple-choice items as they allow students to communicate levels of student achievement more clearly (Badger & Thomas, 1992). According to the authors, open-ended questions "address the essential concepts, processes, and skills that go beyond the specific of instruction to define a subject area. In general, they require complex thinking and yield multiple solutions" (p.1).

Badger and Thomas (1992) also contend that forming hypotheses and testing that hypotheses should not be limited to the science curriculum, nor should problem solving

be limited to math class, but rather, these processes should be taught in reading in general as well.

In developing open-ended discussion questions for classroom use, teachers should take several suggestions into consideration. Students should be asked to continually explain and expand on their ideas in writing and in discussion. Problems should be addressed in the context of current affairs to stimulate thought. Evaluation should occur frequently in order to focus instruction and find evidence of student understanding. In literature, specifically, students should focus on reflecting "...on their own lives, the lives of others, or the human condition in general..." while reading and discussing literature remembering that the quality of the argument or justification outweighs the memorization of facts (Badger & Thomas, 1992, p.2). Collins (1998) adds that the atmosphere should be one that fosters inquiry, a setting in which students are encouraged to question, make predictions, organize ideas, and support value judgments.

Beck, McKewon, Hamilton, and Kucan (1998) refer to open-ended questions as "Query-Driven" but it is similar to the open-ended questions discussed in Badger and Thomas and Collins. Student responses, text orientation, and discussion dynamics are all improved using Query-driven questions (open-ended questions) over "Question Driven Questions". Query driven questions elicit longer more elaborate answers and are usually in the students' language. They also help readers construct meaning out of text, and lead to student to student interaction, exciting pace, and student initiated questions (Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, and Kucan, 1998). The teacher's role in responding to students in this setting is "...to listen and respond to answers in a non-judgmental, truth-seeking fashion" (Chamot, 1993, p.2).

Engaging students in the answering of open-ended questioning does not have to occur only in large classroom settings. Research suggests that group situations would work well because students need to hear the viewpoints of others and compare these viewpoints to their own thinking. By placing readers in small group situations for the purposes of discussing reading material, the teacher is helping to decrease egocentricity which Collins (1998) suggests is necessary for improving student performance in reading.

Educators need also make a variety of supplemental reading materials available to readers. This according to Collins (1998) would include, but not be limited to, newspapers, magazines, internet, games, films, and audiotapes. "In order for a student to become a lifelong learner, he or she must be able to handle print—environmental print, recreational print, and vocational print" (Collins, 1998, p.1). In fact, according to Collins (1998), "Any medium which stimulates student's interests and involvement is worthy of consideration" (p.2).

The lack of student motivation has been overwhelming as of late especially in the area of reading. Many students only read when they are assigned to read. Others do not even do that. American Educator (1998) suggests that developing student's interests in reading must be as much a focus as developing their reading skills. Teachers need to motivate students to read, and there are several ways according to Collins, that this can be accomplished. According to Fuchs (1987) as cited in Collins (1998), "By helping students find personal reasons to engage in print, you help them realize the ultimate goal of reading—that of constructing personal meaning" (p.1). One way to engage students in print, according to Collins (1998), would be to ask readers to complete projects at the end of their reading assignments. Examples given are murals, dioramas, and model

construction based on text material. If students are given the project assignments before engaging in reading, they are more likely to read with a purpose and therefore would be engaged in the reading process. The bottom line, however, according to the author, is that in order to motivate students to read and become better readers, one must read!

Whether the reason for poor reading comprehension is because of a lack of motivation, poor prior knowledge on the part of the reader, or simply that strategies designed to improve reading comprehension are not being utilized in classrooms, it is agreed that comprehension is not a passive experience. "New research in how to teach reading comprehension has been generated by the recognition that comprehension is not a passive, receptive process, but an active, constructive, reader-based process" (Morgan and Richardson, 1997). By introducing those aforementioned various reading comprehension strategies, and insuring students are provided with many opportunities to experiment and practice these strategies in the classroom, it is hoped that reading comprehension of middle school students will be improved dramatically.

Project Objectives and Processes

Specific reading strategies will be implemented in the targeted seventh grade language arts class from January 1999 to May 1999. As a result of these strategies, students will exhibit an increased use of reading strategies to strengthen their comprehension of print materials, as measured through a variety of assessment materials which will include standardized tests, teacher constructed tests, written papers, and response journals. The students will employ the learned strategies in literature, content areas text reading, newspapers, magazine, and other printed material used to glean information.

To accomplish the project objective, the following processes will be necessary:

1. Pre-reading activities will be developed, taught, and practiced to activate prior knowledge.
2. A series of directed activities using graphic organizers will be implemented.
3. A variety of vocabulary instruction practices will be modeled and used.
4. Active reading strategies will be modeled and used during the reading process.
5. In-place curricular units will be enhanced with the addition of a variety of directed reading activities.

Project Action Plan

In order to implement effectively the research plan, preliminary groundwork must be in place. Prior to the implementation of the strategies, the instructors will design and administer baseline surveys to determine current reading habits and strategies used by middle school students. Once this information has been gathered, the implementation of the research may begin.

There will be many strategies introduced to the seventh grade language arts students. These strategies are primarily used during three phases of the reading process: pre-reading, active reading, and post reading. Each phase has specific activities designed to enhance reading comprehension, thereby making reading a more meaningful experience for students.

During the pre-reading segment the following activities will be used:

1. KWL charts will be set up. The "What You Know" portion to be used prior to reading (Appendix D).
2. Prior knowledge will be activated through discussion, videos, and cloze activities (Appendix E).

3. Predicting what the selection will be about through title and pictures if applicable.
4. Skimming will be taught and used as a method of gleaning necessary information.
5. Questioning—"What You Want To Know" (the 'W' from the KWL chart) about the selection (Appendix F).
6. Vocabulary words will be introduced and new methods of learning words will be used (Appendix G).
7. Anticipation guides will be used to establish prior knowledge of the students.

During the active reading of a story or selection the students will use a variety of techniques to raise comprehension levels and maintain interest in the reading. These techniques are as follows:

1. Predicting—Students will continue to make predictions throughout the reading of the selection.
2. Questioning—Students will question what is happening and so forth during their reading (Appendix H).
3. Paraphrasing—Students will be asked to re-phrase sections of the reading (Appendix I).
4. Inferring—Students will be guided to learn higher levels thinking skills such as inferring while they are reading. They will be encouraged to go beyond the text and read between the lines.
5. Embedding questions—Both oral and written embedded questions will be used as a strategy for increasing comprehension (Appendix J).

6. KWL—The KWL chart will be referred to through the reading to determine if the 'W' section questions are being answered (Appendix K).
7. Model—Think aloud approach will be modeled for the students.

During the post reading process the students will be encouraged to reflect upon what they have just read in the following manner:

1. Cooperative group discussion responding to the reading selection (Appendix L).
2. Graphic organizers such as Venn Diagrams will be utilized (Appendix M).
3. Students will keep reflective journals to record thoughts about the reading beyond a regurgitation of the facts (Appendix N).

During the sixteen-week period that the reading interventions will be tested, many curricular units will be taught. Some of these units are cross-curricular in which the entire team of teachers will be involved. The first of these units is a mystery unit, which is cross curricular. The mystery unit is followed by a novel study of Mildred Taylor's Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry. After completion of the novel, the students will begin a unit on the titanic followed by the final novel study of the year. The students will read The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton.

The mystery unit which is entitled "Mystery Festival" is a cross-curricular unit used by the seventh grade team of teachers. The unit includes a variety of reading activities that will lend themselves very well to the use of strategies. Students complete a "One Hour Mystery" working on their own and in cooperative groups. A variety of short stories and plays will be read, discussed, and analyzed by the student's comprehension will be monitored throughout the reading with questioning and journal

writing. Activities will be closely tied to the multiple intelligences in order that a variety of needs are met. A mystery will be written on an individual basis using story prompts from the book Mysteries of Harris Burdick by Chris VanAllsburg.

The novel Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred Taylor is a powerful story of racial turmoil in the 1930's. This novel is the basis for a larger, more comprehensive unit on equal rights. Students will be led through a series of extensive pre-reading activities, discussions, and videos to activate prior knowledge. Typically students at this age do not have a deep understanding of what African-Americans endured throughout history. Additionally they do not realize that discrimination still exists today.

During the reading of the novel, many of the aforementioned strategies will be used to guide the students through the novel. As well as having students keep a reflective journal during their reading, the students will be tested periodically to check for comprehension. Character and setting sketches will be used to determine if students have gained an understanding of the characters' personalities through their reading and discussions of the novel (Appendix O).

The *Titanic* is usually a very high interest topic for seventh grade students. The unit includes reading short stories, researching the time period, and creating a Titanic scrapbook. The comprehension activities will be the same for this unit as for the prior units. The addition of the research element will bring a new dimension to the action plan. Students will be reading more expository, factual writing and paraphrasing information found. The students will be asked to transfer that information into writing which will show an understanding of what has been read. Since the interest in the Titanic is generally very high, students are immediately engaged in the subject and

remain so throughout the unit. Reflective journals will be kept and a final piece analyzing the unit will be written.

The final novel study is The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton. Some prior knowledge has been activated with the completion of the unit on discrimination so in general students will have a good knowledge base for the novel. During the reading of this novel, students engage in cooperative group activities for vocabulary. In addition, students will keep a journal reflecting on their thoughts while reading. Students will be expected to demonstrate the ability to utilize the reading strategies outlined previously in this novel study. Students are quizzed periodically to check comprehension, and many cooperative group discussions will be held to guide the learning process (Appendix P).

Methods of Assessment

In order to ascertain the effectiveness of the interventions used in the targeted classroom, the students will be assessed in a variety of ways. The students will be quizzed periodically with standardized quizzes from the McDougal Littell Literature and Language series. Additionally, teacher prepared tests will be administered after completion of the novels. Reflective journals and reflective writing will also measure student achievement.

Chapter 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve reading comprehension in the targeted seventh grade language arts students. Intensive reading strategies instruction was the selected method to effect students' reading comprehension skills and abilities. Reading strategies were taught using several different literature units already in place in the seventh grade curriculum. These units include the novel Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred Taylor, The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton, a "Mystery Festival" unit (which includes many short stories and plays from the genre of mystery), and a unit about the famous sinking of the *Titanic*.

With each literature unit many reading strategies were taught. Not only were specific strategies modeled to the students, but the students were also made aware of the name of each strategy and when an appropriate time was to incorporate such a strategy while reading independently. The various strategies were broken up into three groups. Those groups are pre-reading activities, active reading strategies, and finally post reading strategies. For each literature unit a decision was made as to which strategies from each group (before, during, and after) would be taught. The following is a list of the pre-reading strategies taught and reinforced throughout the intervention: prior knowledge discussions, prediction activities, skimming the text, and KWL (specifically "know" and "wonder" were used in the pre-reading stage). New vocabulary was also taught in a

variety of ways prior to reading the selections. Finally, anticipation guides were also provided to focus student thinking before and during reading.

The intervention's goal was to create active readers during the reading process. Since many times students focus on word recall rather than the author's meaning, it was decided to introduce several reading strategies that readers could utilize during the reading process in order to encourage active reading. Embedding questions into the text to stimulate thinking while reading is one strategy used during the reading process. The questions embedded into the text asked students to stop in the middle of their reading and predict future events, ask themselves questions about the characters or events of the story, paraphrase events, share opinions, and infer author's meaning. Another approached utilized is the "W," or "Wonder", section of a KWL graphic organizer. Finally, all of the above interventions were modeled using the think aloud approach.

Post reading activities were just as important to teach as the pre-reading and active reading strategies. The readers utilized many graphic organizers after reading had taken place. Venn diagrams to compare and contrast, KWL, and student initiated graphic organizers were used to stimulate post reading thought. Cooperative groups met several times to discuss the reading selections and their opinions of those selections. Finally, students were asked to respond to the selections in writing journals. The students were encouraged to respond to the events and characters in the reading selection in a reflective manner. Sometimes students were given stems to help them get started and other times they were asked to respond to reflective questions posed by the teacher.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of teaching reading strategies before, during, and after reading, comprehension tests were given weekly throughout the intervention (Appendix Q). These tests were based on the readings done in class and include the entire targeted seventh grade class. The results represent a class average.

Table 5

Comprehension Test Results:

January	February	March	April	May
75%	76%	90%	89%	88%

These results show a positive effect on reading comprehension. The results show an increase in scores from the beginning of the intervention in January to the end of the intervention in May. This is an average increase of more than 10 percentage points.

Another tool used to measure the effect of reading strategy instruction on comprehension was the Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 1997) was administered to 8 of the 27 in the targeted class. The results showed a discrepancy between word recognition and comprehension scores. All of the students tested except one, student number six, did poorer on the word recognition score than on the comprehension score. Student number five scored the same on both word recognition and comprehension tests. Since most students were less proficient on the comprehension portion of the tests, this suggested that students were able to word call to the test administrator, but did not actually understand the meaning of the sample seventh grade level text used in the assessment

The same Reading Inventory was administered in May to the same eight students with varying results.

Table 6

Basic Reading Inventory Results Before and After Intervention

		Word Recognition	Comprehension
Student 1	Before:	Independent/Instructional	Instructional
	After:	Independent	Frustration
Student 2	Before:	Independent/Instructional	Instructional/Frustration
	After:	Independent/Instructional	Instructional/Frustration
Student 3	Before:	Independent/Instructional	Instructional/Frustration
	After:	Independent/Instructional	Instructional/Frustration
Student 4	Before:	Independent/Instructional	Instructional
	After:	Independent	Independent
Student 5	Before:	Instructional/Frustration	Instructional/Frustration
	After:	Independent/Instructional	Instructional/Frustration
Student 6	Before:	Instructional/Frustration	Instructional
	After:	Independent/Instructional	Frustration
Student 7	Before:	Independent	Frustration
	After:	Independent/Instructional	Instructional/Frustration
Student 8	Before:	Instructional/Frustration	Frustration
	After:	Independent/Instructional	Independent/Instructional

There are two ways to interpret these results. The first is to look at how many students did as well or better on the comprehension portion of the test compared to the word recognition portion of the test. In the base line data, six out of the eight students did better on the word recognition section of the tests compared to the comprehension portion. This data suggest that students are proficient at word recall whereas they do not necessarily understand what it is they are reading. In the post- test, two students showed no difference between word recognition and comprehension. The other six students did poorer on the comprehension section than they did on the word recognition section, suggesting again, that students can word call well, but are not able to comprehend what is being read.

The other way to interpret the results is to observe the individual improvements from the first test. On the word recognition portion, two students did not improve; their scores remained the same. One student did poorer on the post- test than he did on the original test. However, a majority, five students, made a marked improvement on the second test as far as word recognition is concerned. The results of the comprehension test are very similar to the word recognition results. Two students remained the same, while one student did poorer on the post- test. Again, the majority of the students showed an improvement from the first pre-test to the second post-test in the comprehension category. Five students performed better on the post-test.

Conclusions and Recommendations

After reviewing the data collected from the entire semester during which the interventions were implemented, it appears that the comprehension for the targeted seventh graders was increased. The class average on comprehension checks in January

was 75%; by May the comprehension was 88%. Of course, there could be a variety of reasons for this increase. The most obvious reason that comes to mind is that in January students are just returning from a two-week vacation and have several additional days out of school in January. This will interfere with the momentum that students build within a unit of study.

As the students move into the novel unit of Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, interest in the subject matter increases. Even though the background knowledge still needs to be established, the material discussed is of such high interest that it is believed that the students will focus more readily on the reading and discussion material. The momentum continues through the *Titanic* unit and the last novel The Outsiders. Perhaps the interest generated by these units has allowed the students to accept and use the reading strategies presented to them. When reviewing the material read in the Basic Reading Inventories, it is possible that the students were not interested in the stories and therefore merely read words instead of constructing meaning from what they read. Children are not much different from adults in that they must have an interest in what they are reading. How many times do adults have to read and re-read a section from text in which they have little interest in order to construct meaning?

If we want students to comprehend reading material at a higher level, we must provide them with the necessary strategies. If students are interested in the material, they will be more receptive to the strategies (KWL, prior knowledge, embedding questions, skimming, and prediction) and will become active readers. These strategies appear to help increase the reading comprehension.

The active reading strategies will be implemented again in the next school year with the next group of seventh graders. From the experience in the past year, it seems that when students see the purpose for using the strategies, they will implement them in their reading. Many times students do not realize that the strategies they are being taught are, in fact, intended to increase their comprehension. As educators we will use these interventions in the upcoming school year. The targeted class appeared to enjoy the activities and the reading when they were able to better comprehend the material.

As educators we are not thorough enough in our explanations to children. We also need to realize that students need to be taught and given the opportunity to practice the same strategies. In essence they need to be reminded of the purpose for their reading.

The increase in the reading comprehension scores would appear to be significant enough to validate their use in the classroom on an ongoing basis. When students see this type of success in the classroom, they may be encouraged to continue utilizing the strategies to assist them in becoming active readers.

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Appendix A
Parent Survey

Dear Parents,

As part of a Master's program study, we are conducting a survey of parents about student's reading attitudes and habits. Please help us out and fill out the following survey to the best of your ability. Please return it with your child as soon as possible. Your names need not be on this form. We greatly appreciate your assistance with this task.

1. How often per week do you see your child reading independently? Please circle one:

not at all
less than an hour
two hours
three hours
four hours
five hours or more

2. How often per week do you and your child read together? Circle one please.

not at all
less than an hour
two hours
three hours
four hours
five hours or more

Appendix A
Parent Survey

3. Please answer true or false:

_____My child appears to enjoy reading
_____My child appears to be frustrated by reading
_____My child does not like to read
_____My child somewhat likes to read
_____ My child would rather watch television than read
_____ My child would rather do another activity than read
_____My child is a good reader, in my opinion
_____My child could use some help in reading, in my opinion
_____My child sees me reading often
_____My child reads for pleasure
_____My child reads for information
_____My child reads the newspaper often
_____My child reads magazines often
_____My child reads information from the internet often
_____My child reads textbooks for class often (social studies, science etc.)
_____My child shares what he/she is reading with me.
_____My child asks me questions about what he/she reads.
_____My child goes to the library to check out books.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We are very appreciative of your efforts.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Skeen and Mrs. Costa

Parent Survey

Tally Sheet

Dear Parents,

As part of a Master's program study, we are conducting a survey of parents about student's reading attitudes and habits. Please help us out and fill out the following survey to the best of your ability. Please return it with your child as soon as possible. Your names need not be on this form. We greatly appreciate your assistance with this task.

1. How often per week do you see your child reading independently? Please circle one:

2 not at all || 16%
3 less than an hour ||| 25%
4 two hours |||| (33%)
1 three hours | 8%
1 four hours | 8%
1 five hours or more | 8%

12
Graph

2. How often per week do you and your child read together? Circle one please.

12

6 not at all |||| | 50%
5 less than an hour |||| 42%
two hours
three hours
1 four hours |
five hours or more 8%

Graph

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(please turn the page over for more survey questions)

3. Please answer true or false:

+ 8 My child appears to enjoy reading ++++ |||
− 0 My child appears to be frustrated by reading
− 3 My child does not like to read |||
? 6 My child somewhat likes to read ++++ |
− 10 My child would rather watch television than read ++++ |||| |
9 My child would rather do another activity than read ++++ ||||
+ 11 My child is a good reader, in my opinion ++++ +++ | /
− 2 My child could use some help in reading, in my opinion ||
+ 8 My child sees me reading often ++++ |||
+ 8 My child reads for pleasure ++++ |||
+ 8 My child reads for information ++++ |||
+ 2 My child reads the newspaper often ||
+ 8 My child reads magazines often ++++ |||
+ 5 My child reads information from the internet often ++++
+ 6 My child reads textbooks for class often (social studies, science etc.) ++++ |
+ 8 My child shares what he/she is reading with me. ++++ |||
+ 5 My child asks me questions about what he/she reads. ++++
+ 4 My child goes to the library to check out books. ||||

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We are very appreciative of your efforts.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Skeen and Mrs. Costa

Appendix B
Student Survey

Student Survey

So as not to be too overwhelming for the students, a survey of 25 questions regarding student reading interest and reading strategy use will be administered to the entire class over a period of five days in January 1999. Students will answer five questions a day. We will repeat this process in May 1999 after the interventions have been tested.

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Appendix B
Student Survey

Student Survey on Reading Strategies #1

Please choose the appropriate letter and fill in the bubble on the Scantron sheet.

A. almost never
B. once in a while
C. much of the time
D. almost always

How often do you.....

1. read silently for 15 minutes or longer at a time?
2. write about something you have read?
3. read aloud to a classmate or group of students?
4. look for and think about main ideas in the reading?
5. go back and reread if you do not understand what you are reading?

Appendix B
Student Survey

Student Survey on Reading Strategies #2

Please choose the appropriate letter and fill in the bubble on the Scantron sheet.

A. almost never
B. once in a while
C. much of the time
D. almost always

How often do you.....

6. read for your own information, not as a school assignment?
7. visit the local library and check out books?
8. read for pleasure?
9. read assigned reading?
10. make predictions while you read?

Appendix B
Student Survey

Student Survey on Reading Strategies #3

Please choose the appropriate letter and fill in the bubble on the Scantron sheet.

A. almost never
B. once in a while
C. much of the time
D. almost always

How often do you.....

11. relate stories to your own experiences?

12. question what you are reading?

13. skim reading material before you begin reading?

14. use context clues while reading to find the meanings of new words?

15. read magazines in class?

Appendix B
Student Survey

Student Survey on Reading Strategies #4

Please choose the appropriate letter and fill in the bubble on the Scantron sheet.

A. almost never
B. once in a while
C. much of the time
D. almost always

How often does your teacher.....

15. talk to you about the reading material before you read it?

16. talk about new or difficult words you will read?

17. teach you how to read better?

18. show you how to use the "think aloud" strategy?

19. show you how to use the internet for class assignments?

Appendix B
Student Survey

Student Survey on Reading Strategies #5

Please choose the appropriate letter and fill in the bubble on the Scantron sheet.

A. almost never
B. once in a while
C. much of the time
D. almost always

How often do you.....

21. use context clues while reading to find the meanings of new words?

22. use KWL while in classes that ask you to read for information?

23. use webs while in classes that ask you to read for information?

24. discuss what you have read in small cooperative groups?

25. discuss what you have read with the entire class?

Read better
A. 6 21%
B. 12 55%
C. 2 10%
D. 2 10%

Think aloud
A. 8 36%
B. 6 27%
C. 8 36%
D. 0

Internet
A. 18
B. 3
C. 1 5%
D. 0

Relate
A. 7 39%
B. 5 28%
C. 4 22%
D. 2 11%

Question
A. 5 28%
B. 8 44%
C. 2 11%
D. 3 17%

Skim
A. 7 39%
B. 9 50%
C. 1 5%
D. 1 5%

Context clues
A. 8 44%
B. 5 28%
C. 3 17%
D. 2 11%

Magazines
A. 4 50%
B. 1 39%
C. 4 11%
D. 0

Read for information
A. 7 35%
B. 6 30%
C. 5 25%
D. 2 10%

Visit library
A. 11 55%
B. 7 35%
C. 1 5%
D. 0

Read for pleasure
A. 9 45%
B. 7 35%
C. 2 10%
D. 1 5%

Read assigned
A. 1 5%
B. 5 25%
C. 4 20%
D. 10 50%

Make predictions
A. 8 40%
B. 8 40%
C. 3 10%
D. 1 10%

Read silently
A. 2 9%
B. 10 44%
C. 6 28%
D. 3 14%

Context clues
A. 8 42%
B. 5 26%
C. 2 11%
D. 4 21%

KWL
A. 7 37%
B. 5 26%
C. 5 26%
D. 2 11%

Webs
A. 9 47%
B. 6 32%
C. 4 21%
D. 0

Discussion groups
A. 3 16%
B. 9 47%
C. 7 37%
D. 0

Discuss in whole class
A. 2 11%
B. 7 37%
C. 6 32%
D. 4 21%

Talk before
A. 1 5%
B. 9 41%
C. 5 23%
D. 7 32%

Discuss difficult words
A. 1 5%
B. 8 36%
C. 10 45%
D. 3 14%

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Write about 7 33%
A. 5 35%
B. 5 24%
C. 1 5%
D.

Read aloud 1 5%
A. 9 50%
B. 4 19%
C. 1 5%
D.

Look for main ideas 5 23%
A. 8 35%
B. 4 19%
C. 4 19%
D.

Go back and reread 4 19%
A. 8 35%
B. 1 5%
C. 8 38%
D.

Appendix C
Colleague Survey

Dear Fellow Colleagues,

As part of our Master's Program, we are surveying teachers and students about reading habits and teaching strategies. Please fill out this survey as honestly as possible. Please keep this confidential and do not put your name on it. Your participation is greatly appreciated! When you're finished, you may put the completed survey in either Melynda Costa's or Jan Skeen's mailbox.

1. What grade do you teach?_____

2. How many students do you teach in your language arts class? _____

3. How many of your students do you consider to be good readers?_____

4. How many students do you consider to be average readers?_____

5. How many students do you consider to be poor readers? _____

6. On what do you base your beliefs about these students? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. Approximately how much time do you give your students per week to read independently chosen material in class? Please circle one.

less than a half an hour

a half an hour

an hour

more than an hour

Appendix C
Colleague Survey

8. About how much time per week do you allow your students to read assigned material? Please circle one.

less than a half an hour
a half an hour
an hour
more than an hour

9. Do you read outloud to your students? _____
If you answered "yes", please go on to #10. If you answered "no", please skip to #12.

10. How often would you estimate you read outloud to your class per week? Please circle one.

under 20 minutes
a half an hour
an hour
more than an hour

11. What types of reading material do you read to your students? Please circle all that apply.

fiction
non-fiction
poetry
reference
biography
other _____

Appendix C
Colleague Survey

12. How often do you take your students to the media center for the purpose of checking out books?

once a week
once a month
once a quarter (or nine weeks)
never

13. About how many novels do students read with teacher guidance?

one novel per school year
two novels per school year
three novels per school year
four or more novels per school year

14. What reading strategies do you actively teach in your language arts classroom? Please circle all that apply.

predicting
questioning
skimming
summarizing
classifying
evaluating
activating prior knowledge
vocabulary instruction
building background knowledge
modeling good reading strategies

(next page please)

Appendix C
Colleague Survey

think aloud
open ended questioning
cooperative group discussions
newspaper, magazine, internet and television reading and evaluation
visualization
personal connections
context clues
graphic organizers
embedded questions
GIST
SQ3R
FLIP
sketch to stretch
talking drawings
mapping and charting

Please list/describe other strategies you may use:

Context clues
A. 8 47%
B. 5 26%
C. 2 11%
D. 4 21%

KWL
A. 7 37%
B. 5 26%
C. 5 26%
D. 2 11%

Webs
A. 9 47%
B. 6 32%
C. 4 21%
D. 0

Discussion groups
A. 3 16%
B. 9 47%
C. 7 37%
D. 0

Discuss in whole class
A. 2 11%
B. 7 37%
C. 6 32%
D. 4 21%

Talk before
A. 1 5%
B. 9 47%
C. 5 26%
D. 7 32%

Discuss difficult words
A. 1 5%
B. 5 26%
C. 10 47%
D. 3 14%

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Read better
A. 6 21%
B. 17 55%
C. 3 10%
D. 3 10%

Think aloud
A. 8 36%
B. 6 27%
C. 8 36%
D. 0

Internet
A. 18
B. 3
C. 1 5%
D. 0

Relate
A. 7 39%
B. 5 28%
C. 4 22%
D. 2 11%

Question
A. 5 28%
B. 8 44%
C. 2 11%
D. 3 17%

Skim
A. 7 39%
B. 9 50%
C. 1 5%
D. 1 5%

Context clues
A. 8 44%
B. 5 28%
C. 3 17%
D. 2 11%

Magazines
A. 4 50%
B. 1 39%
C. 2 11%
D. 0

Read for information
A. 7 35%
B. 6 30%
C. 5 25%
D. 2 10%

Visit library
A. 11 55%
B. 7 35%
C. 1 5%
D. 0

Read for pleasure
A. 9 45%
B. 7 35%
C. 2 10%
D. 1 5%

Read assigned
A. 1 5%
B. 5 25%
C. 4 20%
D. 10 50%

Make predictions
A. 8 40%
B. 40%
C. 3 10%
D. 10%

Read silently
A. 2 9%
B. 10 44%
C. 6 28%
D. 14%

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Write about
A. 7 33%
B. 8 38%
C. 5 24%
D. 1 5%

Read aloud
A. 1 5%
B. 9 56%
C. 4 19%
D. 1 5%

Look for main ideas
A. 5 23%
B. 8 38%
C. 4 19%
D. 4 19%

Go back and reread
A. 4 19%
B. 8 38%
C. 1 5%
D. 8 38%

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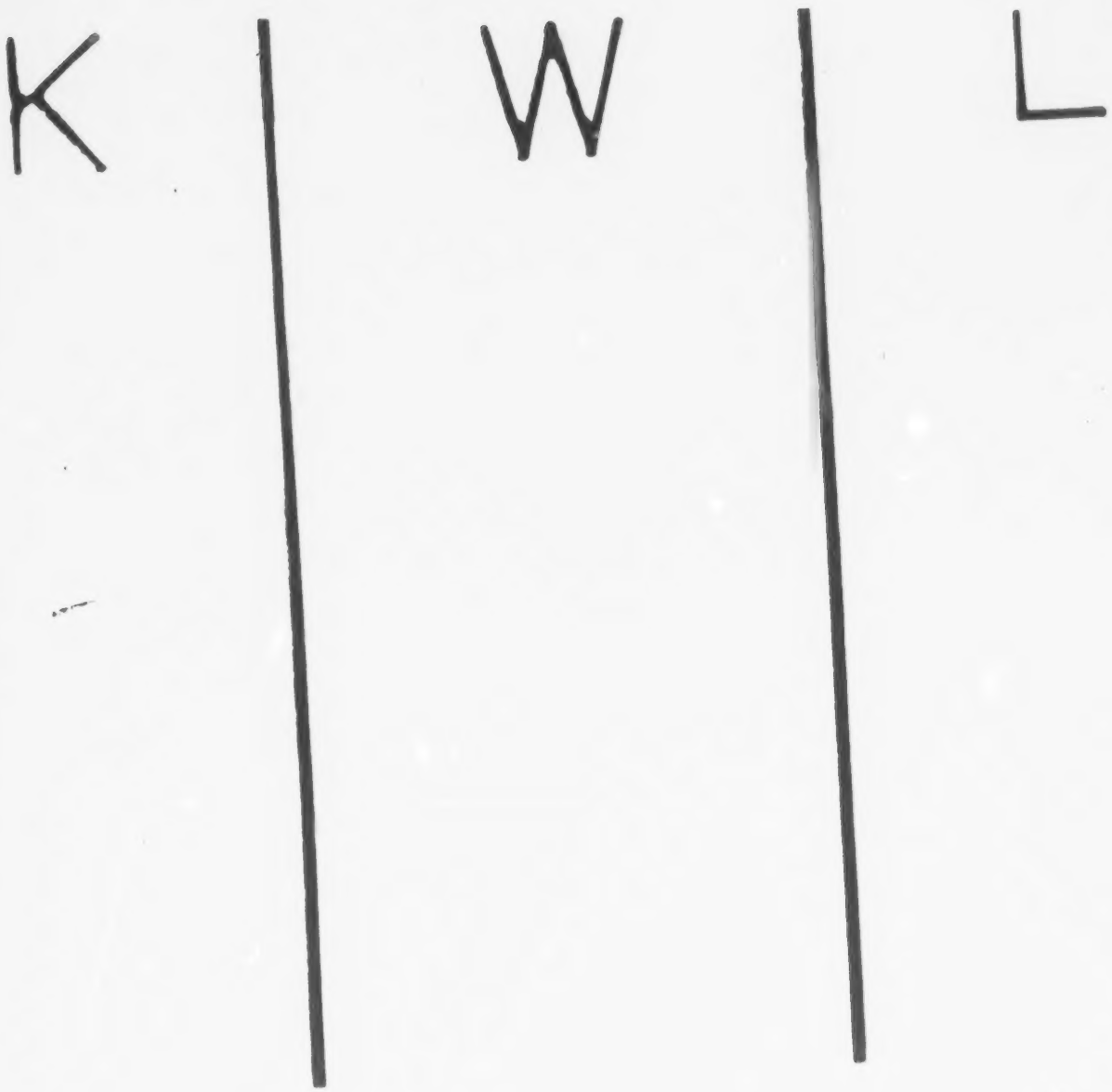
Appendix D
Pre-reading Strategy



Appendix E
Pre-reading Activity

Cloze Activity for "The Titanic Lure and Lore"

After the *Titanic* headed out into the Atlantic, the crew received warnings from eight different ships of icebergs and pack ice lying ahead. But the sightings came _____ at different times over _____ two-day period and _____ not combined on one _____. If they had been, _____ would have revealed an _____ belt that stretched 80 _____ from north to south _____ lay directly in the _____ path.

Although Captain Edward J. _____ lacked the full picture, _____ did know that ships _____ warning of ice. He _____ the *Titanic* farther south _____ usual and told the _____ to be especially watchful.

However, he did not _____ speed. The managing director _____ the White Star Line, _____ was on board, wanted _____ *Titanic* to set a _____ transatlantic record for a _____ Star ship. In addition, _____ was sure that, given _____ brilliantly clear weather, any _____ could be spotted in _____ to avoid collision.

But _____ were problems. A calm _____ meant that no high-visibility _____ would break at the _____ of icebergs. A new _____ meant that no moonlight _____ reflect off the surfaces _____ icebergs. To top it _____ off, the lookout's binoculars _____ somehow been left in _____.

Finally, Smith and his _____ has no experience in _____ a ship of the _____ immense size- and didn't _____ how slowly it would

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Appendix E
Pre-reading Activity

_____ to various maneuvers.
39

Ship _____ were set by the _____ Board of Trade, many
40 41

_____whose members were ship _____. In the Titanic's case,
42 43

_____ Star officials argued that _____ room for more lifeboats
44 45

_____ greatly reduce the feeling _____ overall roominess and
46 47

luxury. _____ would be much less _____, for instance, for the
48 49

_____ Staircase and the glittering _____.
50 51

And, of course, everyone knew the *Titanic* was unsinkable.

Appendix E
Pre-reading Activity

Key for the Cloze Activity for "The Titanic Lure and Lore."

1. in
2. a
3. were
4. chart.
5. they
6. ice
7. miles
8. and
9. liner's
10. Smith
11. he
12. were
13. than
14. lookouts
15. reduce
16. of
17. who
18. the
19. new
20. White
21. Smith
22. the

Appendix E
Pre-reading Activity

23. danger
24. time
25. there
26. sea
27. waves
28. bases
29. moon
30. would
31. of
32. all
33. had
34. Southampton
35. officers
36. handling
37. Titanic's
38. understand
39. react
40. regulations
41. British
42. of
43. owners
44. White
45. making
46. would
47. of
48. There
49. room
50. Grand
51. ballrooms

Appendix E
Pre-reading Activity Student Sample

Cloze Activity for "The Titanic Lure and Lore"

After the *Titanic* headed out into the Atlantic, the crew received warnings from eight different ships of icebergs and pack ice lying ahead. But the sightings came ___(1) att.n___ at different times over ___(2) 2___ two-day period and ___(3) were was___ not combined on one ___(4) chart dirt___. If they had been, ___(5) this___ would have revealed an ___(6) ice. l...___ belt that stretched 80 ___(7) 12___ from north to south ___(8) that___ lay directly in the ___(9) lines Its in the___ path.

Although Captain Edward J. ___(10) Smith___ lacked the full picture, ___(11) he___ did know that ships ___(12) were___ warning of ice. He ___(13) drove took___ the *Titanic* farther south ___(14) as than___ usual and told the ___(15) lookouts___ to be especially watchful.

However, he did not ___(16) change reduce___ speed. The managing director ___(17) of___ the White Star Line, ___(18) who___ was on board, wanted ___(19) the___ *Titanic* to set a ___(20) new___ transatlantic record for a ___(21) white___ Star ship. In addition, ___(22) he___ was sure that, given ___(23) them___ brilliantly clear weather, any ___(24) thing___ could be spotted in ___(25) time___ to avoid collision.

But ___(26) there___ were problems. A calm ___(27) night sea___ meant that no high-visibility ___(28) basis___ would break at the ___(29) [illegible]___ of icebergs. A new ___(30) moon___ meant that no moonlight ___(31) would___ reflect off the surfaces ___(32) of___ icebergs. To top it ___(33) all___ off, the lookout's binoculars ___(34) must___ somehow been left in ___(35) the___ ___(36) South Hampton___.

Finally, Smith and his ___(37) crew___ has no experience in ___(38) [illegible]___ a ship of the ___(39) Titanic's___ immense size- and didn't ___(40) know___ how slowly it would ___(41) understand___

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Appendix E
Pre-reading Activity Student Sample

to various maneuvers.

Ship were set by the Board of Trade, many whose members were ship . In the Titanic's case, Star officials argued that room for more lifeboats would greatly reduce the feeling overall roominess and luxury. would be much less , for instance, for the Staircase and the glittering .

And, of course, everyone knew the *Titanic* was unsinkable.

Appendix E
Pre-reading Activity

Appendix E
Pre-reading Activity

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What types of different social groups exist in your school or town?

What characteristics make up the people in each group?

- Racial background
- Religious
- Athletic ability
- Money
- Appearance
- Intelligence
- Neighborhoods

How do people in the group interact with each other?

How do they interact with other groups?

Are there fights between groups? If so what kind? Where? How are they resolved?

What changes because of fighting?

Are there important reasons to be in a social group? What are they?

Do members join willingly?

Are any groups dangerous?

Are any groups helpful?

Appendix F
Questioning Before Reading

K	W	L
*Over half the people died. * It was known to be unsinkable * It hit the ice burg at night. * It sank * Over 2000 people on board * Had 1st, 2nd, & 3rd classes on it * 1st class treated better	* Is it true 1 boat was filled with luggage? * What would happen if you were found on another deck? * How many survived * How much $ to build it * more about the remains * How much did tickets cost * How much steel/iron did they use? * How long did it take?	

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Appendix G
Vocabulary Activity

Word	Guess	Definition
acquired v	to have/obtain	
clammy adj.	sticky moist wrinkly	
disgrace v/N	rude, dishonorable disappointment to group, respect	
gingerly adv.	happily, calmly, lightly, slowly, carefully	
glaring adj./v	staring looking hard shiny in sun	
incidentally adv.	accidentally not on purpose faulty	
incredulous adj.	amazing outstanding incredible	
rarities N	not seen a lot rare special hard to find	

Vocabulary!
Pre activity

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Appendix G
Vocabulary Activity

ACQUIRED (V)

To gain possession of

The student acquired all his knowledge by studying.

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Appendix H
Questioning Before Reading

1) Where did Uncle Hammer get all that money to buy the car & the coat

2) Why can't Cassie let the fact that she apologized to Mrs. Lillian Jean

3) Why was T.J. teasing Stacey about his coat, but kept on saying he didn't like it.

4) What is an enmity.

5) Why did Uncle Hammer get so upset when he heard what the Simms did to Cassie.

6) What is David Logan going to say when he hears about what happened in Strawberry.

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Appendix I
Active Reading

from *Exploring the* Titanic *(text page 93)*

Reader's Guidesheet

Time Line

A time line can help you keep track of events as you read. As you read, write down what happens at the various times shown on the time line below. A few events are already recorded for you.

April 10, 1912, noon	The *Titanic* casts off.
April 14, 1912, A.M. (the fourth day)	
April 14, 1912, (lunchtime)	
April 14, 1912, 7:30 P.M.	
April 14, 1912, 9:00 P.M.	The captain goes to the bridge, where he and the officers talk about the difficulty of spotting icebergs on a moonless night.
April 14, 1912, about 11:00 P.M.	
April 14, 1912, 11:40 P.M.	
April 14, 1912, shortly after 11:40 P.M.	
April 15, 1912, just after midnight	
April 15, 1912, 12:30 A.M.	Captain Smith gives orders to start loading lifeboats.
April 15, 1912, 12:45 A.M.	
April 15, 1912, 2:05 A.M.	Fifteen hundred people are still on the sinking ship.
April 15, 1912, shortly after 2:05 A.M.	
April 15, 1912, first light of dawn	

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Appendix I
Active Reading Student Sample

from *Exploring the* Titanic *(text page 93)*

Reader's Guidesheet

Time Line

A time line can help you keep track of events as you read. As you read, write down what happens at the various times shown on the time line below. A few events are already recorded for you.

April 10, 1912, noon	The *Titanic* casts off.
April 14, 1912, A.M. (the fourth day)	They got another iceberg warning
April 14, 1912, (lunchtime)	They got 2 more iceberg warnings
April 14, 1912, 7:30 P.M.	They got 3 more iceberg warnings
April 14, 1912, 9:00 P.M.	The captain goes to the bridge, where he and the officers talk about the difficulty of spotting icebergs on a moonless night.
April 14, 1912, about 11:00 P.M.	The men in the radio room went to sleep they shut off the californias radio and brushed off the ic
April 14, 1912, 11:40 P.M.	They spotted the iceberg, the ship hit the iceberg iceber turn
April 14, 1912, shortly after 11:40 P.M.	water was pouring into boiler rooms Andrews told the captain that the ship would only stay afloat for an hour or so?
April 15, 1912, just after midnight	The Captain ordered the lifeboats uncovered
April 15, 1912, 12:30 A.M.	He ordered them to shoot rockets to get the ships attention Captain Smith gives orders to start loading lifeboats.
April 15, 1912, 12:45 A.M.	The 1st lifeboat was lowered
April 15, 1912, 2:05 A.M.	Fifteen hundred people are still on the sinking ship.
April 15, 1912, shortly after 2:05 A.M.	The band put down their instruments to sav themselv
April 15, 1912, first light of dawn	The carpathia came to rescue them.

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Appendix I
Active Reading

STOP AND PROCESS

1. Vocabulary Words (Define 3 words from the reading)	2. Write a four sentence summary.	3. Draw an image you are left with.
4. Write 2 questions you had while reading.	5. Connect to something you know. (movie, song, experience, book, or poem etc.)	6. Personal response

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Appendix I
Active Reading Student Sample

STOP / PROCESS

1 Vocabulary Words Prophecy = prediction; foretelling the future accommodation = a room in hotels, ships, trains etc. aristocratic = wealthy, privileged people omen = an event or sign believed to point toward a future happening	**2** 4 sentence summary This magnificent ship sets out to sail. It has everything! They recieve 7 iceberg warnings in 1 day. (You would think that would tell you something) They are ignored. The ship hits an iceberg. Life boats are sent out shortly after it sinks.	**3** Draw an image you are left with I am stuck w/ 2 things: I cannot imagine the madness on the ship, and a huge ship 19 miles away sinking, sending rockets up, and the ship still not noticing anything!
4 Two questions did the captain go down w/ the ship? Did the people in the radio room get out?	**5** Connect to something you know – movie, song, own experience, book, poem, etc. This story goes right w/ the movie, I couldn't believe it! They were exactly the same! (except the made up love story)	**6** Personal response I thought this was an awsome story! It had tons of information in it, and it actually had times of events! I loved it!

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Appendix J
Active Reading Embedded Questions

Active Reading "The Titanic Lure and Lore"

1. Why did the ship steam at top cruising speed into the ice zone?

Prediction:_____

_____

_____

Answer from reading:_____

_____

_____

2. Why did the Titanic have fewer than half the number of lifeboats needed for its passengers and crew?

Prediction:_____

_____

_____

Answer from reading:

_____

_____

_____

3. Why was the evacuation of the ship handled so poorly?

Prediction:

_____

_____

_____

Answer from reading: _____

Appendix J
Active Reading Embedded Questions

_____

_____

4. After the Titanic went down, why did people in the lifeboats ignore the desperate screams of the hundreds of people floating in their life belts?

Prediction: _____

_____

_____

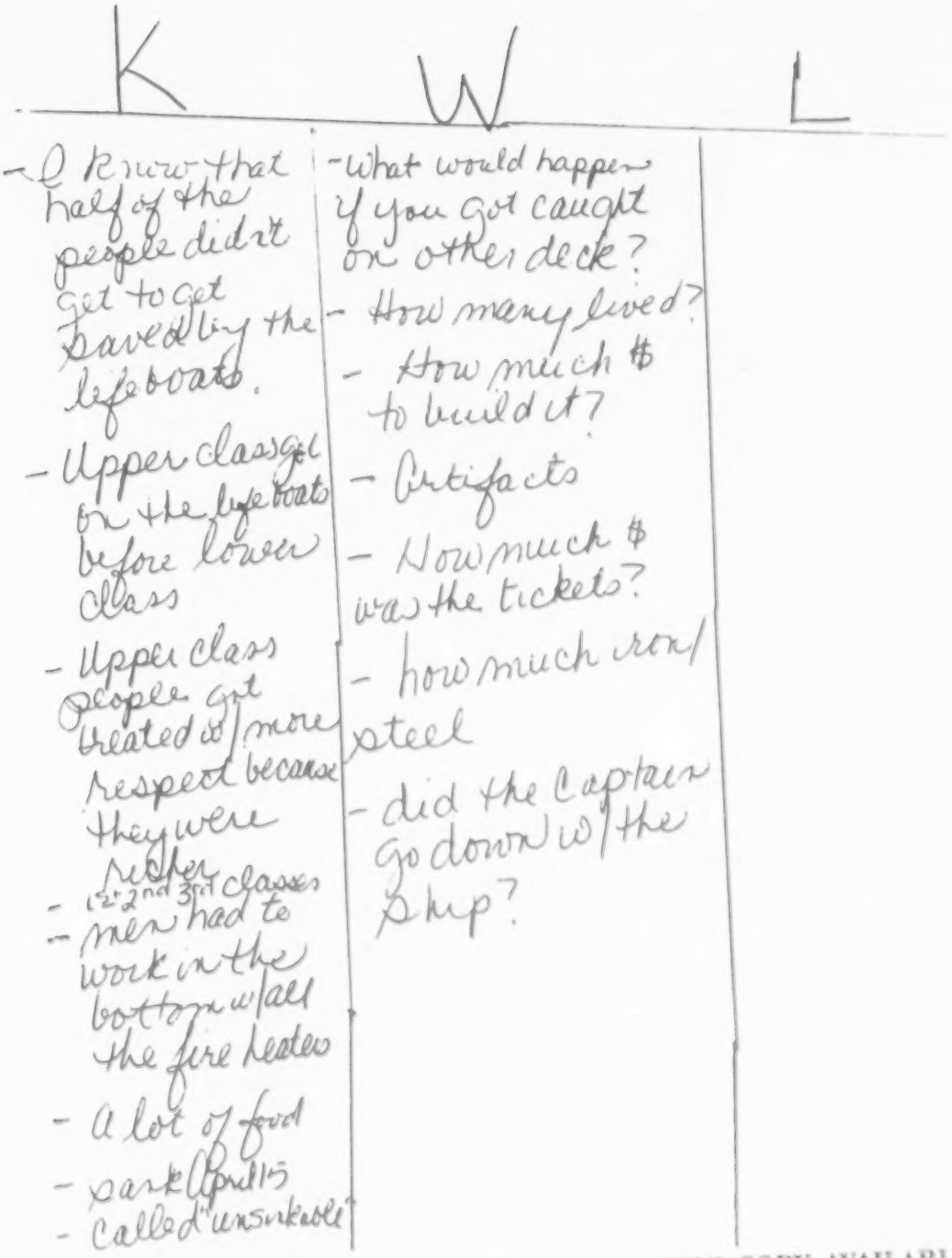
Answer from the reading:

_____

_____

_____

Appendix K
KWL Chart Student Sample



K	W	L
- I know that half of the people didn't get to get saved by the lifeboats. - Upper class got on the lifeboat before lower class - Upper class people got treated w/ more respect because they were richer - 1st, 2nd 3rd classes - men had to work in the bottom w/ all the fire heater - a lot of food - sank April 15 - called "unsinkable"	- What would happen if you got caught on other deck? - How many lived? - How much $ to build it? - Artifacts - How much $ was the tickets? - how much iron/ steel - did the Captain go down w/ the Ship?	

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Appendix L
Responding to Reading Cooperative Group Discussion Questions

"Exploring the Titanic"
by
Robert Ballard

Answer the following questions using the story "Exploring the Titanic" that you read last night.

1. Why might many wealthy passengers choose to travel on the Titanic?

2. What don't the captain and the crew pay more attention to the warning about ice?

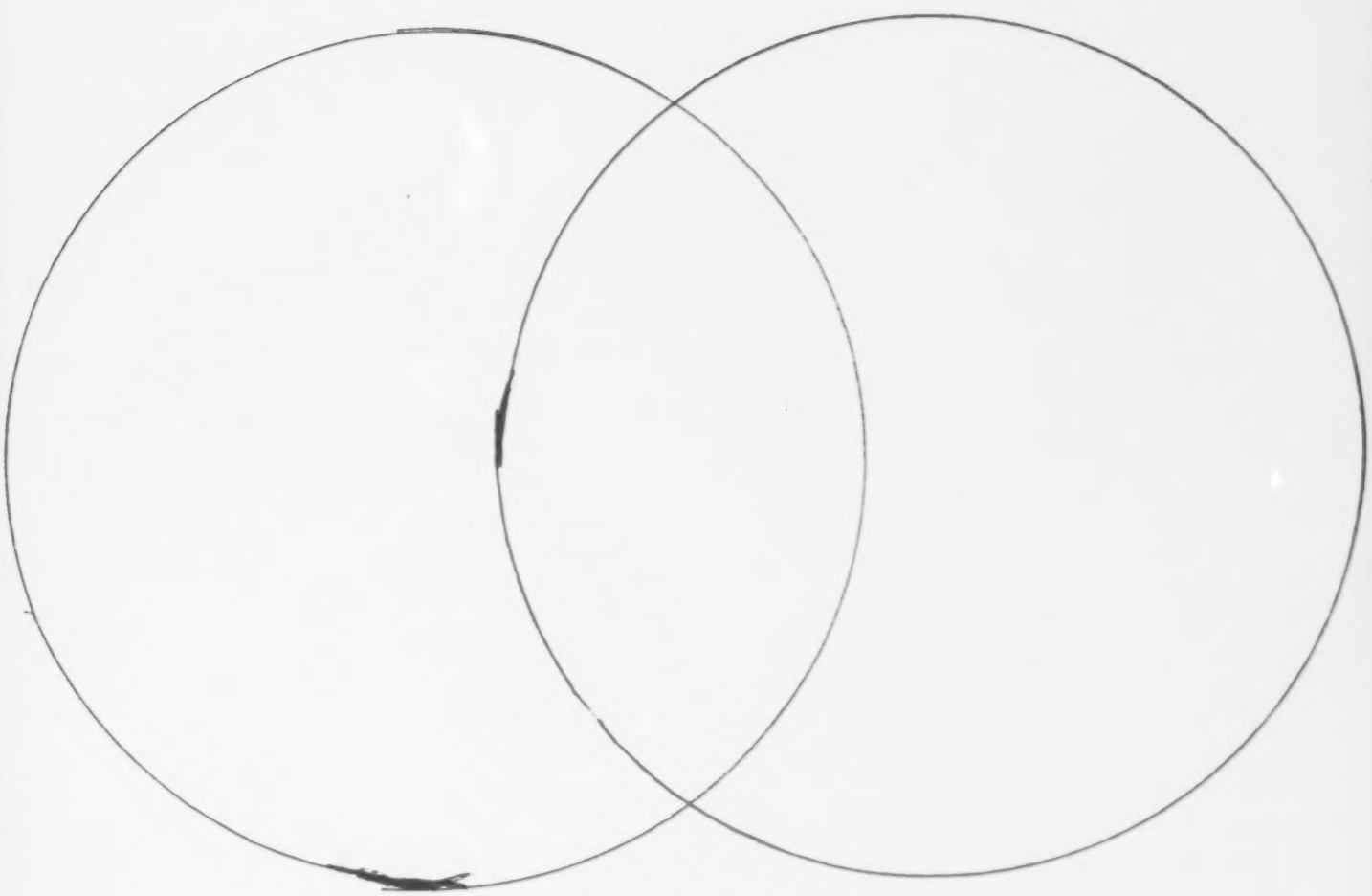
3. From page 101, put yourself in Jack Thayer's place and explain why he is not yet worried about what is happening on the ship.

4. From page 102, why does Andrews tell Thayer the news "in a low voice?" Do you think the captain should have announced to all passengers that the ship was going to sink in an hour?

5. How has the author brought the last terrible moments to life for the reader?

6. The "unsinkable" is now sinking. What theme or main message does this suggest? Think of the main theme of this unit.

Appendix M
Venn Diagram



Appendix N
Reflection Response

Name _____

PNI

P _____

_____

N _____

_____

I _____

_____

Appendix O

Character and Setting Sketch

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

Assignment: To create a sketch of Spokane County where the Logan family lived.

Directions: Use quotations from the book in order to sketch and color a picture map of Spokane County. This picture must be based on textual evidence. **That means all details came from the book.** For example, do not draw in a hotel if there wasn't one mentioned in the book. On one side of the paper you will draw and color your picture. On the backside you must list specific quotes and the page numbers where they were found. These quotes help support your drawing.

Things to include in your picture: The Logans farm, cotton fields, forests, Harlan Granger's plantation, the Avery's, Simmes,' and Berry's houses. The two schools, the Great faith Church, the roads and the bridge; the Wallace store; Smellings Creek; and any other locations noted in the novel.

You might want to go back and look over the beginning chapters where the setting is established. **This assignment is worth 25 points. Good luck and have Fun! (Be creative!)**

Assignment: To create a character sketch book for the characters in Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry .

Directions: Use quotations from the book in order to write a character sketch and drawing of the main characters in the book Roll of Thunder . This sketch must be based on textual evidence. **That means that all details must come from the book.** For example, do not use characteristics to describe a character that you cannot support with quotes from the book. At the top of your paper you will draw the character and under it you will write a description of that character.

You will want to refer to the handout of physical and personality attributes to describe the characters. You must sketch at least 7 characters.

This assignment is worth 25 points. Good luck and have Fun!!

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Appendix P
Comprehension Test

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry
by
Mildred Taylor

FINAL TEST

MATCHING

Match each character with the correct description.

1. ____ David Logan	A. a gutless store owner
2. ____ Mary Logan	B. a sly and sneaky young boy
3. ____ Big Ma	C. the narrator of the story
4. ____Cassie Logan	D. a talented and hardworking teacher
5. ____ Stacey Logan	E. a comforting and loving grandmother
6. ____ Little Man	F. a thoughtful and smart man
7. ____ Mr. Morrison	G. a good, born and bred Southerner
8. ____ Uncle Hammer	H. a strong, physical, and quiet man
9. ____ T. J.	I. a wealthy, threatening land owner
10. ____ Mr. Jamison	J. a boy who is loyal and trustworthy
11. ____ Harlan Granger	K. a man who reacts too quickly and wants the guilty punished
12. ____ Kaleb Wallace	L. a meticulous child

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Appendix P
Comprehension Test

TRUE OR FALSE

Write "T" is the statement is True and "F" if the statement is False.

1. ____ Stacey eventually gets his jacket back from T.J.
2. ____ Mr. Morrison lives on the Logan Farm so he can protect them.
3. ____ The Logans shop in Vicksburg because the merchandise is better.
4. ____ Cassie realizes that Lillian Jean is better because she is white and becomes her friend for life.
5. _____ When Uncle Hammer learns that Cassie is hurt and humiliated by Charles Simms, Uncle Hammer shoots him.
6. ____ T. J. hit Mr. Barnett over the head when he was discovered in Barnett's shop.
7. ____ R.W. and Melvin respected T.J. and liked being his friend.
8. ____ Harlan Granger relieves Mary Logan of her teaching job so she can write a book.
9. ____ Uncle Hammer sells his Packard to help pay for the land.
10. ____ David Logan sets fire to his cotton to stop the mob from lynching T.J.

SEQUENCE:

Put these events in order by number 1 to 5 on the lines.

____ T.J. almost get lynched

____ Boycott of the Wallace's store

____ Mama loses her teaching job

____ Robbery of the Barnett's store

____ Stacey fights with T.J. at the Wallace store

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Appendix P
Comprehension Test

SHORT ANSWERS

Write your answers in the spaces provided.

1. Give three examples from the novel of racial prejudice. The answers should be about 5 sentences each.

a.

b.

c.

Appendix P
Comprehension Test

ESSAY QUESTION

Discuss the meaning of the title of the book Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry. Give examples from the book that support your points. You may use your book for this question.

Discuss the theme (lesson or meaning) of the book Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry.

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Appendix Q
Comprehension Check

Section 1: Chapters 1 - 3 *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*

What Do You Know?

Answer the following questions about Chapters 1, 2, and 3.

1. List the four Logan children and their ages.

2. The Logan land was once part of the Granger plantation. How did the Logan family get their land? What crop do they raise?

3. In what state does the family live and in what year?

4. Why must Papa work at another job? What is the work and where does he do it?

5. What does the driver of the school bus like to do to the black children who must walk to school?

6. Why does Little Man throw his school book onto the floor and stomp on it?

7. What does Mama do to the books for her seventh-grade class?

8. Describe Mr. Morrison. Why does Papa bring him to stay with the family?

9. What was the cause of John Henry Berry's death?

10. What do Stacey, Cassie, and their brothers do in revenge for the continual school bus episodes?

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Appendix Q
Comprehension Check

The Noble Experiment (text page 143)

Comprehension and Vocabulary Check Tests

Part 1: Comprehension Check Test

1. What does Branch Rickey show about his beliefs when he shares a room with a black athlete?

   _____

2. What is Rickey looking for in his search of baseball teams? _____

   _____

3. What are Rickey's plans for Robinson? _____

   _____

4. What does Rickey warn Robinson about? _____

   _____

5. How does the interview between Rickey and Robinson end? _____

   _____

Part 2: Vocabulary Check Test

In the blank, write the letter of the word that best completes the sentence. Not every word will be used, and no word will be used more than once.

A. cynical	B. eloquence	C. incredulous	D. indignant	E. insinuation
F. retaliate	G. shrewdly	H. speculating	I. taunt	J. ultimate

1. If you truly forgive someone, you won't try to _____ against that person.
2. It is rude and mean to _____ people by calling them names.
3. In folk tales, foxes often behave _____.
4. One may have to work hard and make many sacrifices along the way in order to succeed at his or her _____ goal.
5. The question "Will one turkey be enough for you for lunch?" could be considered an _____ that you eat a lot.
6. I picked up the package and shook it, _____ about what I might find inside.
7. When Marissa glared furiously and walked away, I knew she was _____ about being left out.

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